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Housekeepers' Chats

Thurs., Dec. 22, 1927

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Menus for the Christmas Dinner." Information, including menus and recipes, from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Last night, after the dishes were done, and I had settled down to plan Christmas dinners, who should call me up but my Next-Door-Neighbor.

"Aunt Sammy," said she, "please invite me over. I'll promise not to say a word, all evening, if you'll let me come over and sew, while you plan your radio program."

Of course I told her to come on over, and bring her sewing. Her sewing proved to be a sampler, which she is making for her kitchen.

"Don't you like it, Aunt Sammy?" asked my Neighbor. "It will lend a touch of decoration to my plain kitchen walls, and besides, I like the motto. How's this, to hang above the sink?

"When we on simple rations sup,
How easy is the washing up,
But heavy feeding complicates
The task, by soiling many plates."

"Quite appropriate," I said, "since you never were particularly fond of washing dishes."

"You are right," said my Neighbor. "I do not really mind washing dishes, but still and all, I can't say that I get an authentic thrill, out of doing them. I shall have plenty of dishes to wash, on Christmas day, for I have invited seven people to eat dinner at my house. I'm planning my work ahead of time, for, as I read somewhere recently, '... the hostess should remember that her serene, untroubled, presence, at the dinner-table, means more to her guests than an elaborate menu, or service.' I knew that I would not be a 'serene and untroubled' hostess, unless I used a little common sense. So I planned my work ahead of time, and selected dishes which can be made Friday and Saturday. I don't intend to spend my Christmas day in the kitchen. Want to hear my plans, Aunt Sammy?"

"Surely," I said, "begin with the fruit cocktail, and describe each course."

"The fruit cocktail," repeated my Neighbor. "I'm not having a fruit cocktail. I'm going to start right in with the main course. Who needs a fruit cocktail, or soup, before turkey and fixings? I shall eliminate the first course. This means fewer dishes to serve, and fewer dishes to wash. Besides, if I start with the main course, there will be more room for the festive plum pudding dessert.

"Turkey heads my menu. I shall prepare the turkey for roasting, and make the stuffing, on Saturday. Then, on Christmas day, I can stuff the turkey, and sew it up, ready for the oven, in a short time. Most any kind of Christmas meat can

be prepared the day before. Take a fat fowl, for instance. It might be simmered until tender, on Saturday. Then, about an hour before dinner time, heat up the dressing, which was also prepared the day before, stuff the chicken, and brown it quickly, in the oven. Or, if baked ham holds the place of honor, boil it a day or two beforehand and let it stand in a cold place, in the liquor in which it was boiled. On Christmas day, reheat the ham, in the liquor in which it was cooked, skin it, cover it with bread crumbs and sugar, stick in a few cloves, and put it in the oven for a final browning, just before dinner.

"Let's see, what next? Potatoes. White potatoes to be scaloped, or sweet potatoes to be candied, may be cooked the day before, and arranged in a baking dish, ready for the final cooking. The green vegetable -- spinach, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, or what have you -- may be washed and prepared for the pot, a day ahead of time.

"Cranberry sauce, or jelly, can be made two or three days before Christmas, and set away in a cold place. Celery can be washed, wrapped well, and put in a cold place.

"The salad -- I'll have either tomato aspic or grapefruit -- can also be fixed on Saturday. The lettuce and salad dressing will be all ready for last-minute combination. I've found that lettuce gets crisper, and more attractive, if it's washed, covered, and allowed to stand, in a very cold place, for a few hours before it is served.

"Now, the dessert. My plum pudding has been made for days. I shall reheat it, just in time to serve. Mince pie, also, could be baked a day or two early. Or a mousse of cream and shredded pineapple, or other flavoring, might be packed down in ice and salt, the day before, and turned out in a frozen mold at dinner time. If the weather is very cold, the mousse could be set outdoors, and the weather will do the rest. Of course, the fruit cake, to serve with the mousse, was baked some time ago.

"Coffee, candy, and nuts, conclude my menu, and I hope to present a 'serene and untroubled countenance' -- even while my husband carves the turkey. Speaking of husbands," said my Neighbor, suddenly, "I'd better go home and see whether mine has bought the holly and tinsel he promised to get."

Without more ado, my Neighbor picked up her sewing, and went home. I was glad she came, because she really has excellent practical ideas about meal planning, and cooking.

If you're ready to write them now, I'll give you two Christmas dinner menus -- neither one of them "different" -- but who wants to be "different", at Christmas time?

Menu Number One includes: Turkey with Chestnut Stuffing, Brussels Sprouts, Mashed Potatoes, Cranberry Jelly, Celery Hearts, Grapefruit Salad, Plum Pudding with Orange Flavored Hard Sauce, Coffee, and Nuts.

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The recipes for Cranberry Jelly, and Plum Pudding, are in the Radio Cookbook. A liquid sauce, a foamy sauce, or a hard sauce is suitable for plum pudding. I'm going to use a hard sauce, made of 4 ingredients:

1/4 cup of butter	1/2 teaspoon vanilla, and
3/4 cup powdered sugar	1/8 teaspoon grated nutmeg

Perhaps I'd better repeat that. For the Hard Sauce, use: (Repeat ingredients)

Cream together the butter and sugar. Add the vanilla and nutmeg. The secret of creamy hard sauce lies in long beating. Chill the sauce, before you serve it. To vary the flavor, grate in the rind of an orange. That makes a delicious sauce. If you don't care for a sauce on your plum pudding, serve a spoonful of vanilla ice cream, or mousse, on the plate with the hot pudding.

My second Christmas dinner menu is as follows: Roast Goose, Browned Onions, Scalloped Sweet Potatoes and Apples, Currant Jelly, Celery Hearts, Caramel Ice Cream, Fruit Cake, Coffee, and Nuts.

The recipe for Sweet Potatoes with Apples is in the Radio Cookbook, but I shall broadcast it, for those who do not yet have their cookbooks. Four ingredients, for Sweet Potatoes with Apples:

3 medium-sized sweet potatoes	1/2 cup sugar, and
4 medium-sized apples.	3 tablespoons butter.

Wash the sweet potatoes, and cook them in their skins, in boiling water. Cool and skin. Cut the potatoes and apples into slices. Place in alternate layers, in a buttered baking dish. Sprinkle sugar over each layer. Add a little water, and bake until apples and sweet potatoes are soft, and brown on top.

That's all, till Friday.

